

Office of Legislative Auditor

**Department of Public Safety and Corrections,
Corrections Services**



Information Report

March 2006

Educational Opportunities for Adult Inmates in State Institutions

The information contained in this report was developed as a result of a performance audit we initiated but did not complete of the Department of Public Safety and Corrections, Corrections Services (the department).

Because of the impact hurricanes Katrina and Rita had on the department's daily operations, we were not able to conduct all necessary tests and analyses necessary to complete the audit. Therefore, we present in this report the following information we compiled before August 29, 2005, from the department's records.

- All 11 state institutions were providing literacy instruction with a total student enrollment of 924 inmates.
- Ten state institutions were offering Adult Basic Education with a total student enrollment of 657 inmates.
- All 11 state institutions were providing General Education Development preparation with a total student enrollment of 1,050 inmates.
- All 11 state institutions were offering at least one vocational training course with a total student enrollment of 1,536 inmates. Most were offering multiple courses.
- Two state institutions were providing faith-based programs of higher education with a total student enrollment of 299 inmates.

I hope this information will benefit you in your legislative decision-making process.

Sincerely,

Steve J. Theriot, CPA
Legislative Auditor

Background

Legal Authority. Louisiana Revised Statute (R.S.) 15:828(A)(1) requires the Department of Public Safety and Corrections (the department) to establish programs including education and vocational training for the rehabilitation of all persons committed to and in the physical custody of the department, consistent with available resources. R.S. 15:828(B) requires the department secretary to prescribe rules and regulations in the facilities and institutions under the department's jurisdiction to encourage voluntary participation by inmates in vocational training, adult education, literacy, and reading programs. The rules and regulations may include provisions for good time for eligible offenders.

Eligibility. Each of the 11 institutions within the state correctional system has its own criteria for eligibility, but generally, inmates are placed in education classes based on a "first out first in" system, according to department officials. In other words, based on sentence length and parole dates, those inmates who are more apt to be released sooner are higher on the list for admission to educational programs.

Inmates with life sentences (i.e., "lifers") are not totally excluded from participating in educational programs. Department officials said that lifers and other inmates with long sentences can be placed in educational programs if they are doing well and can be put to work in the institution to which they are assigned. According to department officials, allowing these inmates to participate in educational programs assists with prison management because it gives hope to the inmates.

Death row inmates are not allowed to attend classes; however, the department provides them with literacy information if they request it, and they can also take correspondence courses. These inmates are also allowed to check out educational materials from the library book carts. The department is considering using the televisions on death row to broadcast educational programming.

Placement. Department policy requires inmates to request placement in educational programs. Once accepted, inmates must participate in pre-enrollment screening for proper placement.

Educational Good Time. Each individual state institution has a good-time policy for education, but all institutions must follow the department's regulation regarding good time. Department policy allows full-time students to earn 10 days of educational good time per month up to a maximum of 180 days. This time is prorated for part-time and correspondence students. The type of crime committed also factors into the rate of good time earned.

Academic Courses

According to the department, academic courses provide inmates with sufficient education to take the General Education Development (GED) test and receive high school diplomas or to enter vocational training programs. The department offers the following academic courses to inmates housed in state institutions:

- **Literacy.** Inmates with a reading level below 5th grade are placed in the literacy program.
- **Adult Basic Education.** A reading level of at least 5th grade is required for ABE courses.
- **GED Preparation.** A reading level of at least 5th grade is required for GED courses.

Special Education. The department provides special education to inmates who are 22 years old or younger and have behavioral, emotional, and/or learning disorders as diagnosed by a diagnostician and identified upon entry into the state correctional system. Inmates enrolled in special education courses are generally taught language and writing skills in smaller classrooms (i.e., no more than 10 students), although they may be taught through individual instruction. Inmates at least 18 years of age may refuse to take special education courses, while parental refusal is required for inmates under age 18.

Funding Sources. Although the department provides most of the funding for academic courses taught in state institutions, some courses are primarily funded by the Special School District #1 (for special education courses), local school systems, and the inmate welfare fund. In addition, the Elayn Hunt Correctional Center received \$167,753 in federal Adult Education Grant funds between July 1, 2004, and September 30, 2005, to provide academic and job life skills courses. Other academic courses are funded by the Corrections Corporation of America and Parkview Baptist School. The instructors of the courses funded by the Corrections Corporation and Parkview Baptist are not department employees, according to department officials.

Teacher Certification. Department policy requires teachers to be certified in the academic areas they teach and to work toward certification in adult education. The department does not require teachers to participate in continuing education, excluding departmental training, once they obtain lifetime certification.

Inmate Tutors. Institutional staff fill, administer, and supervise literacy courses, but inmate tutors teach the classes. The tutors prepare their own lesson plans, which must be approved by the staff. Department policy requires inmates to have obtained a high school diploma or GED and a sufficient score on the Test for Adult Basic Education and to have participated in pre-enrollment counseling to become tutors.

Exhibit 1 on pages 6 through 8 shows the number of faculty, tutors, students enrolled, and students on the waiting list for the academic courses offered at each state institution as of May 31, 2005. We obtained this information from the department's records. However, we were unable to verify the accuracy of the information because of the disruptions caused by hurricanes Katrina and Rita.

Vocational Training

Each state institution offers some form of vocational training; however, infrastructure limitations determine which courses are offered at each institution. Department policy requires that each state institution must establish eligibility criteria for participation in vocational training programs. According to department officials, inmates must have taken the Assessment of Skills for Successful Entry and Transfer test, a testing and advising program for placing students into postsecondary institutions, before placement in vocational training programs. Some institutions also require a GED before entering vocational training.

Funding Sources. The Louisiana Community and Technical College System provides instruction for most of the vocational training courses offered in state institutions, according to department records. The department provides in-kind services such as use of facilities, utilities, and building maintenance in lieu of tuition. In addition, nine state institutions received \$45,000 each in federal Youthful Offender Grant funds between July 1, 2004, and June 30, 2005, to provide vocational training and correspondence study. Other vocational training courses are funded by the department, the Corrections Corporation of America, Parkview Baptist School, and the Washington Baptist Association.

Exhibit 1 on pages 6 through 8 shows the number of faculty, tutors, students enrolled, and students on the waiting list for the vocational training courses offered at each state institution as of May 31, 2005.

Higher Education

Faith-based Programs. In 1995, the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary established a campus at the Louisiana State Penitentiary (LSP). Inmates enrolled in the seminary have the option of graduating with an associate degree in pastoral ministries or a bachelor's degree in theology. The department also provides instruction for a non-accredited discipleship program to the general population of inmates at the Washington Correctional Institute.

Exhibit 1 on pages 6 through 8 shows the number of faculty, tutors, students enrolled, and students on the waiting list for the faith-based programs offered at these two state institutions as of May 31, 2005.

Correspondence Courses. The department allows inmates to take correspondence courses taught by outside instructors. The department uses federal Youthful Offender Grant funds to provide courses to eligible inmates. Inmates not eligible for Youthful Offender Grant funds are responsible for all expenses associated with correspondence courses, according to department officials.

Exhibit 1 Educational Courses Offered at State Institutions May 31, 2005 (Unaudited)					
Institution	Course	No. of Faculty (FTEs)*	No. of Inmate Tutors	No. of Students Enrolled	No. of Students Waiting
Allen Correctional Center	Academic Courses:				
	Literacy	1	34	80	1
	Adult Basic Education	2	32	136	41
	GED Preparation	1	17	36	0
	Vocational Training:				
	Carpentry	1	7	24	10
	Computer Specialist Operations	1	1	13	71
	Culinary Arts	1	30	44	42
	Upholstery	1	4	19	7
Avoyelles Correctional Center	Academic Courses:				
	Literacy	2.6	38	134	23
	Adult Basic Education	1	2	32	13
	GED Preparation	1.4	7	93	6
	Vocational Training:				
	Automotive Technology	1	1	19	6
	Collision Repair	1	0	20	19
	Culinary Arts	2	0	31	20
	Diesel Power Equipment Tech.	1	0	29	12
	Horticulture	1	1	14	5
	Job Life Skills	1	4	76	17
	Masonry	1	2	30	12
	Office Systems Technology	0	0	8	0
C. Paul Phelps Correctional Center	Academic Courses:				
	Literacy	1	11	53	14
	Adult Basic Education	2.5	0	120	32
	GED Preparation	1.5	0	19	18
	Vocational Training:				
	Automotive Technology	1.25	0	19	0
	Collision Repair	1.25	0	17	0
	Sewing	1	0	10	0
	Welding	2.5	0	37	3
David Wade Correctional Center**	Academic Courses:				
	Literacy	1.9	9	62	14
	Adult Basic Education	2.1	3	81	25
	GED Preparation	2	4	67	6
	Vocational Training:				
	Automotive Technology	1	2	19	1
	Carpentry	1	4	23	2
	Heating/AC/Refrigeration	1	1	20	12
	Horticulture	1	2	18	5
	Job Life Skills	1.75	0	49	0
	Office Systems Technology	.25	0	13	0
	Welding	2	2	32	1
* The number of faculty positions is reported as full-time equivalents.					
** This facility includes the Forcht Wade Correctional Center and the Steve Hoyle Rehabilitation Center.					

Exhibit 1 (Continued)					
Institution	Course	No. of Faculty	No. of Tutors	No. of Students Enrolled	No. of Students Waiting
Dixon Correctional Institute	Academic Courses:				
	Literacy	5	12	43	14
	Adult Basic Education	2	1	14	0
	GED Preparation	2.5	23	178	58
	Vocational Training:				
	Automotive Technology	1	7	14	5
	Collision Repair	1	2	14	5
	Communication Electronics	1	9	26	9
	Culinary Arts	1	0	16	7
	Horticulture	1	0	15	0
	Masonry	1	0	0	0
	Welding	.25	0	12	25
Elayn Hunt Correctional Center	Academic Courses:				
	Literacy	1.4	5	57	29
	Adult Basic Education	1.9	3	98	45
	GED Preparation	1.6	3	63	25
	Vocational Training:				
	Automotive Technology	.5	1	13	0
	Carpentry	2	3	24	75
	Computer Specialist Operations	1	1	21	55
	Culinary Arts	0	0	25	22
	Heating/AC/Refrigeration	1	0	22	43
	Job Life Skills	.6	0	98	60
	Outdoor Power Technology	1	1	14	17
	Welding	2	6	47	78
J. Levy Dabadie Correctional Center	Academic Courses:				
	Literacy	.5	14	57	0
	Adult Basic Education	.75	6	76	0
	GED Preparation	.5	0	59	0
	Vocational Training:				
	Horticulture	.25	0	8	0
Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women	Academic Courses:				
	Literacy	.8	18	96	5
	Adult Basic Education	.75	1	4	18
	GED Preparation	2.45	1	113	84
	Vocational Training:				
	Culinary Arts	1	2	22	0
	Horticulture	1	3	30	0
	Job Life Skills	.25	0	8	0
	Marketing Management	.5	0	19	0
	Office Systems Technology	2	1	29	0
	Upholstery	1.25	2	20	0

Exhibit 1 (Concluded)					
Institution	Course	No. of Faculty	No. of Tutors	No. of Students Enrolled	No. of Students Waiting
Louisiana State Penitentiary	Academic Courses:				
	Literacy	1.85	46	194	64
	GED Preparation	1.3	28	263	62
	Vocational Training:				
	Automotive Technology	1	5	38	4
	Carpentry	1	2	29	16
	Culinary Arts	1	3	30	4
	Graphic Communication	1	0	0	0
	Horticulture	1	0	0	0
	Welding	1	4	32	15
	Faith-based Programs	1	0	259	67
Washington Correctional Institute	Academic Courses:				
	Literacy	2	17	92	1
	Adult Basic Education	1	10	50	0
	GED Preparation	1	8	39	0
	Vocational Training:				
	Automotive Technology	1	2	15	13
	Carpentry	1.1	2	10	14
	Job Life Skills	0	2	6	0
	Network Specialist	1	1	16	23
	Outdoor Power Technology	.5	2	31	12
	Office Systems Technology	1.25	0	78	20
	Welding	1	1	14	18
	Faith-based Programs	.25	6	40	0
Winn Correctional Center	Academic Courses:				
	Literacy	1	13	56	2
	Adult Basic Education	1	7	46	1
	GED Preparation	2	10	120	0
	Vocational Training:				
	Automotive Technology	1	1	4	4
	Collision Repair	1	3	24	15
	Computer Spec. Application	1	4	27	24
	Culinary Arts	2	11	37	4
	Heating/AC/Refrigeration	1	2	19	7
	Horticulture	1	6	25	1
	Offset Printing Operations	1	8	17	8
	Welding	1	2	3	4
Source: Prepared by the legislative auditor's staff using information provided by the department.					

Need more information?

Contact Steve J. Theriot, Louisiana Legislative Auditor
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A copy of this report is available on our Web site at www.la.state.la.us.

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